

quent sexist attitudes to intellectual women that, for instance, Byron, Wordsworth, and Hazlitt exhibit. She also blames common but simplistic scholarly dichotomies that oppose the Enlightenment to Romanticism in alignment with reason versus imagination and feeling, and therefore exclude women from Romanticism. The subjects of her case study are Anna Barbauld, a sometime member of the original bluestocking circle, and her niece and pupil Lucy Aikin, both of whom combined reason and sympathetic imagination in their educational writings. Eger argues that Barbauld's books for children nurtured the mass readership for Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads*. In her *Epistles on Women* (1810), on the four stages of civilization, Aikin proposed continued progress for women, but circumscribed and dependent on men's help. In contrast, Barbauld imagined a dystopian future for British culture, where London has become a mere tourist attraction, like the ruins of classical antiquity. As though to prove her point, savage misogynist attacks were directed against her. Eger concludes her book with the reaction, illustrated by Rowlandson's caricature, to the bluestockings' economic success and cultural visibility. She remarks that feminist history is divided in its impulse both to celebrate exceptional role models and to deplore the political status of women qua class. In support, she quotes Mary Wollstonecraft's much-cited dictum: "I wish to see women neither heroines nor brutes; but reasonable creatures."

When Eger suggests that the several bluestockings who were named Elizabeth—Montagu, Carter, and Griffith—would have connected their aspirations with their royal namesake, she is silent on her own connection, a further link in the "mutual relationship between writing about women and writing by women." Her book complements her predecessor Myers's group biography. Eger adds a substantial use of Montagu's unpublished letters, especially for her account of the friendship between Montagu and Carter. She

also adds contemporary literary and visual material to illustrate the changing reception of the bluestockings. Her book is more thesis-driven than Myers's, which results in redundant repetition of her main arguments with every new aspect of bluestocking activities. Overly anxious citation of other critics clutters the text (instead of notes), and quotations tend to be followed by unnecessary and sometimes flat explications. However, her concluding point is well earned and well taken: "One of the costs of recognizing the bluestockings' success is to lose any simple sense of the history of feminism as a story of progress."

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## BECAUSE I AM A GIRL

Tim Butcher, Joanne Harris, Xiaolu Guo, Kathy Lette, Deborah Mogach, Marie Phillips, Irvine Welsh  
London: Vintage, 2010

## REVIEWED BY IFRAH ABDILLAHI

*Because I am a Girl* is an anthology of work by various authors enlisted by Plan International, a child-centered development organization, in order to convey the difficulties young girls experience around the world. Each of the seven stories is written by a different author and expresses their impressions and interpretations of the lives and struggles faced by young women in Togo, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Brazil, Cambodia, Uganda, and the Dominican Republic. The collection as a whole is a hit and miss as far as accomplishing the intended

objective stated by Marie Staunton, Chief Executive of Plan UK to "make girls visible in a way that reports and statistics cannot." Some stories such as the one by acclaimed writer Kathy Lette on her visit to Brazil come across as offensive and insulting in their criticism of the country and its inhabitants. Lette, in an overly simplistic analysis, describes the young girls she encounters as "little more than a life support to their ovaries—reduced, by lack of contraception and lack of access to abortion, into breeding cows." In a country gripped by extreme poverty and a fierce doctrine of Catholic values, in which abortion is illegal but paedophile tourism is endemic, this contributor's chapter, entitled *Ovarian Roulette*, is at times difficult to read due to a narrative steeped in condescension. Other chapters, such as the one offered by filmmaker and novelist Xiaolu Guo, are of a fictional nature, this one in particular accounting the life of a Cambodian police officer who grew up as an orphan and soldier. Her story of a man who later in life gets married and has a daughter whom he loves but goes missing, while interesting, is somewhat difficult to understand and leaves the reader puzzled as to how young girls factor into the story or what the overall message regarding their circumstance is. Still, others such as the piece by Irvine Welsh, broach the theme of migration and prostitution in a unique and insightful manner. His chapter "Remittances" is through a narration by two sisters whose opportunities and outcomes in life vary drastically despite having been raised within the same household. His protagonist offers a nuanced account and insight into the complexities of women's lives in the Dominican Republic, and the negotiations necessary in their roles as mothers, daughters, providers, and prostitutes. By far, however, the most impactful and moving account is offered by literary newcomer Marie Phillips. Phillips travels to Uganda for six days on a visit to the Plan regional offices and tours their programs within the country. Having been

sent brochures with photographs of happy kids with the captions reading 'Children are our future', she is immediately shocked when instead she encounters "a tent full of angry—and adult—prostitutes" stating that "if this was the reality of Africa, it was also the reality of NGO work." Phillips gives a biting critique of Plan's development work, exposing the glaring inconsistency between what they claim to be doing in their programs and the reality of Plan's organizational bureaucracy which has yet to benefit most children within the region. When her frustration boils over, she ends up telling one Plan employee, "you can pay for an author to come over from London to write a piece for an anthology which will make people think that if they donate it will go to the people... only it's not going to go to them because of the culture of bullshit." Overall, the collection does address the subject of child abuse, domestic violence, trafficking of women and children, as well as a host of other issues related to globalization. The extent to which each contributor captures the true stories behind the young girl's plight depends greatly however, on the varying degrees of competence by their authors.

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## GENDER, HEALTH, AND POPULAR CULTURE: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

Cheryl Krasnick Warsh, Ed.  
Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 2011

REVIEWED BY JUDITH MINTZ

Feminist scholars have been exploring medical history for over 20 years. Notable monographs include Cheryl Krasnick Warsh's *Prescribed Norms: Women and Health in Canada and the United States Since 1800* (2010), and Wendy Mitchinson's two feminist history books on the medicalization and social control of women's bodies (1991; 2002). While much of English-speaking women's medical history has focused on social constructionist analyses of reproduction and the medicalization of women's bodies as a response to biological determinist arguments about women and their experiences, there has been a lack of cohesive historical writing about gender and health and how these are represented through popular culture. Krasnick Warsh's collection of 12 essays fills this void, and accurately reflects the current academic shift in several university departmental names from "women's studies" to "gender, feminist, and women's studies" by including writing that examines masculinities, as well as sexuality.

The chapters in *Gender, Health, and Popular Culture* are uniformly rigorously researched according to history disciplinary practice. The wide range of sources for analysis are not only interesting but also cover a century of historical documents that reflect the varieties of women's (and men's) experiences, as well as their representations of health through accessible media ranging from advice manuals to performance. Many of the chapters

in *Gender, Health, and Popular Culture* include footnotes that readers will find helpful. Krasnick Warsh's robust bibliography, which includes both primary and secondary sources that integrate all of the contributing authors' reference materials, is impressive. Mid- and upper-level history, women and gender studies, and health policy students and academics will find *Gender, Health, and Popular Culture* a useful resource that frequently uses Foucauldian analyses of women and men's bodies as both morally and physically regulated by the state and so-called medical authorities.

Krasnick Warsh has skillfully curated the chapters in *Gender, Health, and Popular Culture* as a conversation between contributors. This cross-referencing of each other's work makes the collection cohesive, and essays can be read together or separately. What emerges is a feminist argument that points out the dialectical nature of popular culture's messages to women and girls. The first two chapters examine Australian and American discourses around pregnancy and childbirth in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Featherstone illustrates Australian state attempts to govern white women's pregnancies and childbirth, while Forman Cody examines American prenatal nutrition advice given to women between 1850 and 1950. The difference between national identity contexts is less important than the point of understanding the gendered imagining of woman as biological, cultural, and symbolic reproducers of the nation (Yuval Davis and Stetzler 2002). Many other feminist historians have drawn links between gender and national identity production, pointing out the biological essentialist notions of women's bodies as mothers of the nation, as well as maker and keeper of home spaces from which the nation's warriors may emerge (Arnup 1994; Comacchio 1993). The notion of women as producers of social citizens underpins the first half of *Gender, Health, and Popular Culture*.